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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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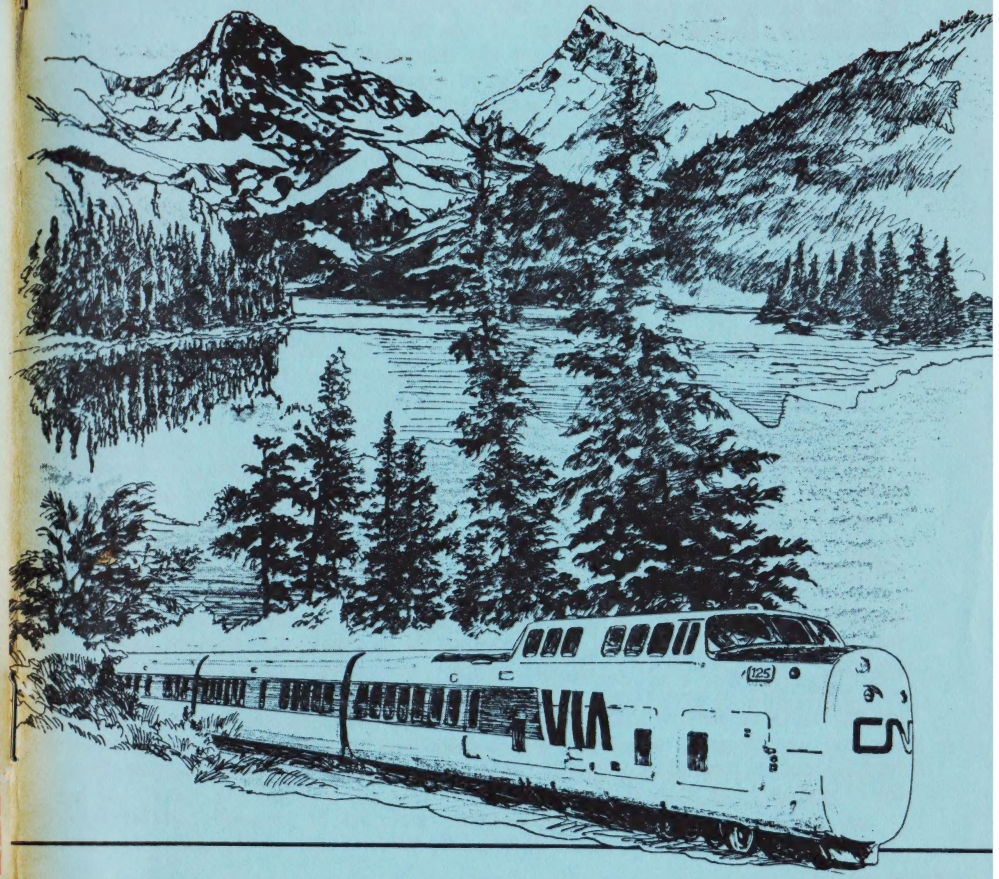
DECEMBER 1977
#165



HOLIDAY ISSUE

ON THE COVER

Some very attractive if slightly far-fetched ads have been coming out of Canada recently. This nice artwork is from a current ad which seems to be a joint effort of Canadian National, VIA Rail Canada, and Western Airlines, and has run in Honolulu newspapers. The far-fetchedness of it resembles that found in early Amtrak ads, when the corporation was just getting organized. Altho an Eastern Corridor TurboTrain is pictured, it is meant to represent CN's transcontinental SUPER CONTINENTAL. The reader is urged to fly Western Airlines to Vancouver and then take a cross-country trip, or part-way, on CN, with the Canrailpass. Current rates on the pass ($275 Canada-wide, $175 Winnipeg and East, and $125 Winnipeg and West for 30 days of unlimited coach travel) are effective thru Dec 31.

LETTERS

Congratulations on your Seventh Anniversary Issue. I have been an RTN cover-to-cover boy for quite a spell.

But two corrections and one addition to the BROADWAY detour story on page 23: The wreck was between Lewistown (not Lewisburg) and Huntingdon. Lewisburg (home of Bucknell University), farther north, is on a small former PRR branch--that is, if Conrail hasn't torn up the tracks within the last few months.

The route was not "unusual detouring." When anything happens in the Lewistown vicinity, that's the standard detour. Incidentally, the Tyrone-Lock Haven line, if my memory is correct, was the line on which the Pennsy tried out its position-light signals and automatic train stop--the trial was for either or both of those things.

James B. Stevenson, Publisher
The Titusville Herald
Titusville, Pennsylvania

I cannot understand the logic of Amtrak's wishing to discontinue the SAN JOAQUIN. There are four trains which have lower ridership which are not being considered for discontinuance... The problem with the SAN JOAQUIN is that the schedule is not convenient. Valley residents must spend the night in the Bay Area and cannot make a convenient one-day outing for shopping, sports events, or visits. I believe a northbound trip early in the morning and an afternoon departure from the Bay Area would result in increased ridership. This would also require only one set of equipment and allow any breakdowns to be repaired in Oakland during the day. The ridership would be much higher if the schedule was faster. A recent round trip to Bakersfield revealed that at least 55 minutes could be shaved off the Santa Fe portion and 5 minutes could be clipped off the SP leg, trimming one full hour from the schedule. Who is going to ride a train that takes 6½ hours from Oakland to Bakersfield when the auto takes only 5 hours? It amazes me that the ridership is as high as it is.

Phil Gosney
Oakland, California

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Thanks for your thoughtful and informative editorial in the 1st Nov issue ("Our Twenty Cents' Worth for Amtrak").

The present policies in Washington are insane. I am absolutely unable to figure out what logic is behind any of the Amtrak funding measures.

I have seldom written to decision makers in the past, probably because I did not want to be marked as a nagger. Now I'm going to start nagging. If my name and view become so commonplace in their offices that they start to say "Oh no, another letter (telegram, etc.) from that guy!", so much the better. I've joined the ranks of the "hopping mad."

Don Bice
Menlo Park, California

AMTRAK TO RESTORE MORE SERVICE IT HAD CUT

Following its monthly Board meeting of Dec 14, Amtrak announced that it will restore all service cutbacks it had made in September and October, in addition to the restorations already announced. In doing so, Amtrak was following the directive of Congress that the system be restored to its pre-autumn level pending the coming big re-evaluation of the national system structure. That re-evaluation, the so-called "zero-base" system plan, will be done jointly by Amtrak and the DOT in the first two months of 1978 and then will be scrutinized by Congress before being finalized.

The restorations announced Dec 14 are as follows: The PALMETTO will resume daily operation in January; it was cut to quad-weekly in the fall but was set back to daily for the holiday period and was to revert to quad-weekly in January. The NATIONAL LIMITED will continue to run via Dayton at least until the zero-base study is done. The CHAMPION will be restored as soon as possible, but at least by March 1 (the zero-base study is to be completed March 1). The St. Louis-Laredo leg of the INTER-AMERICAN, now running tri-weekly, will be restored to daily service approximately next Memorial Day (May 30) and thru next summer on an experimental basis. The EMPIRE BUILDER and NORTH COAST HIAWATHA will both run daily next summer, but some of the consists will be conventional equipment, since not enough new bi-level cars will be ready by that time. (An Amtrak spokesman said that the reason for the present cutback in the two trains--only one of the pair operates each direction daily--is that not enough conventional cars that are reliable in cold weather are available.) The plan to re-route the NORTH COAST via Helena instead of Butte MT has been deferred until the system study is done. Previous service frequencies New Haven-Springfield will be restored Jan 8, and likewise service on the New Haven-Providence CLAMDIGGER. Jan 8 will also see restoration of the one daily Chicago-Milwaukee Turboliner that was dropped, tho the scheduling will be different due to other schedule changes in that corridor. Amtrak will pay for more of the SAN JOAQUIN's operation, on a basis agreeable to Amtrak and the state of California; Amtrak had cut its funding to 4 days/week and the state had picked up the bill for the rest.

Amtrak delayed the decision on these restorations until the Senate had met on the House-approved $18 million supplemental Amtrak appropriation. The Senate met Dec 14 but did not give the bill final approval because of an unrelated technicality. However, it was clear that the Senate would vote to approve the funds, tho this will actually occur probably in January when Congress reconvenes.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC & SCL PLANNING A MERGER

The Southern Pacific and Seaboard Coast Line announced Dec 15 that they are holding preliminary discussions regarding a merger of the two railroads. If approved by the ICC and other groups, such a move would create America's largest railroad and the first coast-to-coast railroad the nation has seen.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

VALPARAISO COMMUTER LINE of Conrail will be abandoned on Jan 9. Conrail estimated the annual operating deficit at 860,000 dollars, and Indiana has not been able to come up with an arrangement for subsidizing the run, which carries about 700 passengers daily on four trains between Chicago and Valparaiso, Indiana.

MCDONALD'S RESTAURANT CHAIN has underwritten the cost of producing 25,000 copies of a brand new timetable for New York's Staten Island Rapid Transit. The new orange and white timetable is the first since the line came under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on Jul 1, 1971. The 14.3-mile line from St. George to Tottenville carries an average of 17,000 riders weekdays.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S long-awaited EL CAMINO San Diego-L.A. train might begin operations on Jan 8, according to an Amtrak spokesman.

BART IS PLANNING to replace station agents in 8 stations with computers on Mar 1, despite opposition from handicapped people who say they rely on them.

TALKS ARE BEING held in the continuing strike of AC Transit bus drivers in our area. Both sides are described as anxious to restore service but can't agree on some terms of the settlement.

WINTER COMMUTER PROBLEMS: Boston's MBTA had what they described as "an incredible series of disastrous coincidences" starting at 1pm on Dec 5, and the snow had little to do with the problems. Commuting was slowed by a combination of a B&M freight derailment blocking the main line from Reading, Ipswich and Gloucester; a power failure leaving the Saugus River drawbridge open; the B&M telephone system being knocked out by vandals; two locomotive breakdowns; two trains with mechanical problems; and shortage of cars and crews due to all of the above.

OLD PACIFIC ELECTRIC right-of-way between Santa Ana and Garden Grove, CA, is being appraised by Orange County Transit District directors for possible use as a rapid transit corridor.

AN INITIATIVE MEASURE that would have outlawed strikes by public workers in the state failed to qualify for the ballot in California this month.

WALL STREET JOURNAL of Nov 21 describes in detail in a front-page article how the UMTA employee who quit last summer allegedly embezzled over $850,000 from funds meant for the Atlanta transit system.

CHICAGO TRANSIT AUTHORITY, in signing a new labor agreement, has won the right to look at a worker's whole service record when judging his competence.

THE PARIS METRO opened a 55-mile portion of its new express subway network on Dec 8. The $500 million line carries rubber-tired trains. President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, after a cab ride at the inaugural, told citizens they should use public transit instead of automobiles.

CARS & CONSISTS

*470 RR Club excursion, "Gorham Gallivant", Portland ME-Gorham NH, Oct 1: engines GT-CV 1776, CV 4924; cars (all CN) 15457 steam generator, coaches 5432, 5414, 5436, 5425, 5421, baggage 9623, coaches 5299, 5284, 5191, 5285, 5228.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, San Luis Obispo Dec 12: engines 616, 617; cars 1028, 1500, 4500 (deadhead), 4544, 4886, 4858, 4871, 4870, dome 9352, 8033, 2602, 2601.

*BLACKHAWK, train 370, Warren IL Dec 12: engine 236; cars 20046, 21236, 21886. Train 371, same: engine 236; cars 21236, 20046.

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 31, Kansas City Dec 7: engines 428 (E9A), 438 (E8A); cars 1006, 1021, 2150 "Silver Flower", 2797 "Middle River", 8323, 5430, 5434, 1045. Train 31 of Dec 6 was annulled at Indianapolis after engines hit a truck & derailed. Psgrs were bused to K.C. Following is makeup consist of train 30 at K.C. Dec 7:

engines 465, 445 (E's); cars 1104, 1004 "Silver Coyote", 2400 "Snohomish River", 8336, 6047, 5458, 5423 (extra coach from K.C.), 2003 (deadhead from train 15).

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 3, Kansas City Dec 7: engines 511, 501 (deadheads for train 30 at K.C.: engines 465, 445; cars 3208 "Boulder Stream", 2400 "Snohomish River", 8336, 5458, 6047), 1109, 1510, 9909, 9974, 9905, 8039, 2253 "Star Range", 2754 "Palm Loch", dome 9201 "Starlight Dome".

*UP Steam Special, Denver-Laramie Nov 26 (all UP): engine 8444 & tender; cars 5716 baggage, coaches 5475, 5474, 5483, 5472, 5486, buffet lounge 6206, coaches 5473, 5468, 5480, 5482, dome coach 7006.

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8, Seattle Nov 24: engines 247, 241 (F40PHR's); BN 76, Atk 6657 heater cars; cars 1118, 1090, 1243, 1553, dome 9480, 4520, dome 9477, 4890, dome 9362 "Mountain View", 8094, 2656 "Silver Crag", 2676 "Silver Ravine", (Seattle-Spokane:) 4893, 4500.

RAIL CANADA

VIA RAIL CANADA President J. Frank Roberts told the press last month "I probably had the best job on the railway as vice-president of CN's St. Lawrence region and I gave it up for this job because I believe in the future of the rail passenger business in Canada." Speaking of equipment usage by the new Crown Corporation, Roberts said that rail diesel cars will be used extensively, with the present CN and CP cars being rebuilt with streamlined nose cones added to reduce wind resistance. Roberts aims at increasing passenger train load factors from 30 or 35% to 60% in the next five years.

THE DERAILMENT OF a coal train on the CP line near Revelstoke, B.C. on Nov 26 blocked the route of the CANADIAN, and rail traffic was detoured over CN lines. Serious damage to a bridge over the Illecillewaet River in Glacier Park was reported. Early on Dec 7 a CN freight derailment near Kinsella, southeast of Edmonton, blocked the SUPER CONTINENTALS there, and they were detoured Saskatoon-Edmonton via North Battleford and Lloydminster, and vice-versa. The westbound SUPER was backed up to Saskatoon to make that detour, while passengers destined for Edmonton were bused ahead. The CANADIAN was annulled after the CP derailment.

HEAVY SNOW STORM hit Prince Edward Island Dec 6, causing termination of CN ferry service on the Newfoundland-Nova Scotia and New Brunswick-P.E.I. runs. While highways in the Maritime Provinces were closed by the snow and high winds, CN trains kept running, altho they fell behind schedules. CN Trans-Island buses in Newfoundland continued to operate. Air service was disrupted.

VIA RAIL CANADA issued three regional timetables, on newsprint paper, for the Oct 30 changes, in addition to the slick national timetable. The three are for Western Transcontinental, Ontario-Quebec, and Eastern Transcontinental service.

CP RAIL CREWS are building a new $3 million bridge over Mountain Creek on the CP main line in Rogers Pass. It replaces a structure dating from 1902, and will reduce curvature on the line that sees CP's heaviest system tonnage operated, as well as the daily CANADIAN.

VANCOUVER B.C. NEWSPAPERS printed a "leaked" report that Don MacDonald, former manager of the Edmonton Transit System, and now head of the city's rapid transit construction project, will be hired by the B.C. provincial government to oversee planning for a rapid transit system on the lower B.C. mainland.

COMING SCHEDULE CHANGES on transcontinental service will see present schedules and operating pattern continuing from Apr 30 to May 31. From Jun 1-Sep 15, two services will operate: the first will run Toronto-South Parry on CN line and South Parry-Vancouver on CP line, leaving Toronto about 5:40pm, Winnipeg 11:15pm, Regina 6am, Calgary 4pm, Vancouver 11:30am; leave Vancouver about 4pm, Calgary 1:50pm, Regina 10:59pm, Winnipeg 8:15am, Toronto 3:15pm. Connecting cars will run on existing trains Montreal-Toronto. (cont'd on page 17)

AN EDMONTON LRT TEST
by Robert W. Rynerson

The trip started off poorly. Instead of a cozy Brill trolley coach, Edmonton Transit's Route 3 provided me with a GMC bus. The fans blew lukewarm air like crazy, but ice still formed on the windows. It was 10pm, Tuesday, Dec 20, 1977, and I was out on what could have been a wild goose chase. Edmonton Transit had quietly begun test runs of the DuWag articulated light rail transit cars it will use on the 4.5-mile long Northeast Line, due to begin operation in spring, 1978. Between 10pm and 6am cars are taken out for test runs, as needed.

As the bus pulled into the Cromdale Loop, I was mentally calculating the use of the 15 minutes I would have before the next trip. At minus 30 degrees Celsius it's no fun missing a bus. I could hear the snow squeaking under my boots as I followed the frost-covered trolley coach wires toward the old Cromdale streetcar barn. Only a person who has grown up in a city that has always claimed to be too small for rail transit service can appreciate the sensation I experienced next.

Out of the chill stillness, the clang of crossing bells, and an almost inaudible rumble growing louder. Gates dropping, red lights flashing over the snow, one auto stopping, and in a cloud of powdery snow, the ghostlike passing of a Frankfurt U-2 car. It it had not been such a quiet night, only the bells would have given audible proof of passage. Edmonton's version of the tried-and-true Frankfurt Stadtbahn car is painted white, with blue and yellow reflectorized striping which enhances the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't image on a snowy night. The articulated car is 24.3 meters long, but can take streetcar-radius curves in and out of the remodelled shop, which once hosted the 1930-era Ottawa steel cars that provided the northernmost electric traction service in the Western Hemisphere.

At the 115th Avenue crossing I found Rail Instructor Murdoch McIntyre keeping warm in a transit pickup truck between stints as crossing flagman. A generation ago McIntyre started work as a streetcar motorman. Since then his city has gone thru a full circle: last runs of streetcars, the last Pullman trolley coach set aside for fan trips, Brills of all types, Nissans, Daimlers, Twins, Macks, and beginning in 1955, GMC's and more GMC's. In that time Edmonton grew from 120,000 to 400,000 inhabitants. During the 1960's, freeway plans drew lines over the map of the city, and some sections now cut thru the city. But in Canada there was no Interstate freeway program, and cities had to pick up part of the cost of land and construction: a powerful force toward rational thinking by municipal leaders. While McIntyre was teaching a new generation of drivers how to handle GMC's and the odd Flyer, the City Council chose to build a rail transit system instead of trying to smash thru residential areas with radial freeways.

McIntyre radioed the crew on the LRT, and passed on my request for a ride. Out of the truck, I stumbled thru deep snow which had filled the drainage area between tracks, toward the LRT yard. As I trudged along, toward the northeast, the steel web's pattern became clear. On the far left (west) side of the right-of-way was the Cromdale Shop and carbarn, with south end tracks converging toward me. On my left was the Canadian National's North Access Track, used until recently by Railiners from Grand Centre and North Battleford. LRT cars will rumble over this line to reach the twin tracks of the Northeast Line. On my right, beyond those tracks, lay the CN Passenger Main Line. It is used by the SUPER CONTINENTAL and by the remaining Railiner service in Alberta, the run to Drumheller. At the extreme right lay the CN South Access Track. CN thru freight is not handled along this right-of-way, but numerous switching moves are made in this area. The Passenger Line is also used for switch engines in a hurry.

Quietly the LRT car slid up beside me and I climbed aboard. Inside, it still had that "new car" smell. The interior finishing has been done by Edmonton firms. I showed my employee's pass and introduced myself to the two transit equipment men who were operating the car. Dave Gake proved to be an interested and knowledgable employee, while his coworker Dennis Twarog drove the train. We were able to chat in a comfortable setting, as the interior noise level never intruded, and welded rail gave a smooth ride.

Gake explained that the runs that night were for a Calgary engineering firm, conducting vibration tests under frozen ground conditions. Calgary has been considering an LRT system similar to Edmonton's, tho a new mayor in the Stampede City has spoken against the idea. The tests were to be run at 40 and 56 kph with measurements taken at varying distances. Anti-rapid transit critics fear that homes will be shaken by thundering trains, or that the noise will make life unbearable in the neighborhood. A Toronto firm of consultants has proposed that high earth berms be constructed along the line to protect the neighbours. The Toronto experts keep referring to the line as a "subway" at public meetings in the area.

In fact, one of the joys of being invited up front for a cab ride by Gakes was watching the amazed reaction of the few pedestrians and motorists out at that time of night. It was clear from the double-takes that for them seeing was believing--maybe! The use of existing railway right-of-way has created such a small impact on the neighbourhood that the public has no idea of the amount of work that has been done. We nosed up to the 82nd Street crossing, the end of our test area, and waited while equipment was moved to a new monitoring location. Traffic began slowing down, and some people stopped to gawk. A young couple walking by stopped, and stood arm in arm looking at the LRT car.

Under Gakes' watchful eyes, I slid into the motorman's seat. It was a far cry from the Portland Traction Brill Master Unit that I had driven at Glenwood, Oregon's museum. Rows of pictogram back-lit push buttons display the status of such things as circuit breakers, sand, track brakes, and so forth. The deadman pedal is located perfectly for comfort, as are the rest of the controls. I was reminded of a friend who is a Mercedes-Benz fan. He used to like to go into detail about engineering for humans, and the Germans' interest in making the driver both comfortable and ready to respond to any situation. The DuWag car must be the Mercedes of the traction world.

Push the right combination of plastic buttons, and push the controller forward, and the car begins to roll. Acceleration and deceleration are both controlled by the same lever, which sends messages to the Simatic Controller, a device which mediates between operator and train. Edmonton's system is definitely not an automated one, but the control system should give a smooth ride, without jerky stops and starts. Pull the controller lever back and braking begins smoothly. In the neutral position the train coasts to a stop, as disc brakes apply when the train has slowed to five kph.

The stop was necessary because I had run out of wire. Line crews still must install overhead on the northern half of the route, and in the underground portion, as of this writing. The wire in place allowed the train to reach a speed of 56kph, as needed for the tests. When the work is completed, train speeds will be restricted in the Cromdale area because of the shops and because of a trolley bus crossing to be installed at 115th Avenue. Trolley buses will also cross at 95th Street. As the latter is located at the tunnel portal, trains will move slowly there too.

On the adjacent CN line, signal aspects changed to mark the approach of Train 2, the SUPER CONTINENTAL. Most of its passengers would be asleep. the shades drawn in its numerous sleeping cars. They would be in another world, tho they sweep alongside us. We share in common two things. We are in rail vehicles, and we are in vehicles built by people who had to make their products work in a real world.

There is no Federal funding ready to pick up the tab for mistakes in Edmonton, and therefore no room for Buck Rogers technology. The DuWag cars, the Siemens overhead, and the Siemens signal systems are all evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

I realized as I climbed down from the car that no one had said anything about mechanical problems. Gakes and Twarog and McIntyre were not at all preoccupied with malfunctioning equipment, and were looking forward to the start of regular operations. Edmonton may have the first rapid transit system that came in a box, and was assembled like a scale model kit. Rail Operations Supervisor Robert Clark (a veteran of tramway days in Glasgow, Scotland) wrote a paper in 1975 predicting that the Boeing Vertol LRV cars and their Toronto competitors would not be up to the DuWag reliability standards by the 1978 opening of Edmonton's first line.

While the severe winter is slowing some work, it appears possible that Edmonton's chief engineer D. L. MacDonald, his contractors and workers, and the people from Siemens/DuWag, will have accomplished the trick of building and operating a rapid transit line by next spring, in less time than it has taken to shake the bugs out of some other systems' rolling stock.

The snow was squeaking under my feet again as I headed back toward the Route 3 turnaround. Midnight was approaching, and it seemed even a more silent night than when I had arrived. The path was little used; I was passing my earlier footprints. In the spring, however, when that snow melts, it will see more foot traffic than it did in streetcar days. Operators, mechanics, railfans, consultants, UMTA types, "experts" of all stripes will beat a path to Cromdale's door. It won't matter what they say, one way or another. Clark and Gakes and Twarog and all the others will make it work. Nobody is going to lean over their shoulder from thousands of miles away with funds and forms.

The bells again, and I turn around for another look. Another swirl of snow and flashing lights, but it's no ghost. It is real.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Give more news to those who are interested in them."

--Chinese fortune cookie message submitted to RTN by contributor Glenn Lee, Dec 17.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Sacramento summary... A Summary of Major Action: ... Transit -- Appropriates $6.2 million for three-year intercity fail and bus demonstration programs, one in the Sacramento-Stockton-San Francisco corridor and another in the Los Angeles-San Diego corridor..."

--Berkeley (CA) Independent and Gazette.

(Rail will not fail.)

The staff of Rail Travel News would like to wish you and your close ones the very best of happy holiday seasons.

ACTION 78!

THE REDESIGNING OF THE AMTRAK SYSTEM... AND WHY CITIZENS MUST GET INVOLVED

In the first two months of 1978 is to occur the greatest crisis that America's national railroad passenger system has ever faced. Already rail supporters are preparing their defenses for the oncoming attack on passenger trains.

Why is this happening? It is part of President Carter's zero-base budgeting plan, an attempt to balance the budget by 1980, regardless of the human and social cost, and to try to reduce the size of the Washington bureaucracy. Both of these aims my be regarded in themselves as worthy ones, but neither has anything to do with America's need for safe, comfortable rail transportation or for the need to reduce energy usage and environmental pollution. In addition, cutting back passenger trains won't balance the budget and it won't affect the Washington bureaucracy one whit.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

Amtrak and the Department of Transportation are to put their heads together and come up with a revised Amtrak system by March 1, 1978. The system presumably will cost the government less in appropriations, and undoubtedly will be smaller than the present system. Routes that don't look good on paper will be cut out of the system, and perhaps some services will be re-routed or added to those that survive the cuts. These cuts will occur outside the Northeast Corridor, which has gained a life of its own and is pretty immune to pruning.

After March 1, Congress will look at the plan that Amtrak and the DOT have devised, and will decide whether to concur in accepting it as the basic Amtrak system.

MUST CITIZENS GET INVOLVED?

If citizens don't get involved now, our nationwide passenger system could be destroyed. If no one hollered, Washington would have no qualms in reducing Amtrak to the Northeast Corridor only.

Since its beginning, Amtrak has functioned under essentially only one Administration. Now the new Administration in Washington is trying to start from ground zero and force the citizenry to fight for what it wants in terms of rail passenger service. Transportation Secretary Brock Adams is probably the most truly political of all the Transportation Secretaries to date. He is throwing Amtrak's fate to the public, and as a politician he will be inclined to listen if the public responds strongly enough.

These ideas are not simply flights of fancy on the part of RTN's editor. Here's a quote from a Downey, California newspaper editorial of last month: "Amtrak officials, like Postal Service officials, are justified in using the lever in an effort to pry more money from Congress. Sure, it's the taxpayers' money. But the taxpayers, through their representatives, can determine the level of subsidy to the semi-independent agencies simply by establishing the scope of services they demand. If the taxpayers want the subsidized services, they are going to have to pay for them."

It's up to us to determine the scope of service we want from our rail passenger system.

WHAT'S THE BEST APPROACH?

There are two main things that can be done. One is individual, and the other is a collective approach. First, write your Senator, your Congressman, President Carter, Secretary Adams, and Amtrak. Second, support citizen lobbies for better passenger train service. On page 11 we provide a list of such organizations.

WHAT CAN I SAY?

The important thing is to express your own feelings in your own words. Decision makers are less impressed by letters that repeat a canned response.

We can try to supply you with information you need to make your points to your own Congressman or other decision maker. We are fortunate in having access to a study of Amtrak route finances made just this month by Amtrak Board member Joseph V. MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald has not been renominated by President Carter, perhaps because he has been too outspoken in favor of long distance trains. In any event, he took data from Amtrak's latest 5-year plan and from elsewhere to try to determine what Amtrak's financial picture would be under five different conditions--with the present system, with one-third and two-thirds of all long distance trains eliminated, with all long distance trains eliminated, and finally with Amtrak cut back to the Northeast Corridor only.

	Psgr Miles	Revenues	Total Cost	Deficit	Appropriation Required	Deficit per Psgr Mile
FY 1978 as in 5-yr plan:	5,157,929	352,866	943,366	590,500	545,000	11.5¢
One-third of long-hauls dropped:	4,033,234	286,359	843,342	545,983	500,483	13.5¢
Two-thirds of long-hauls dropped:	2,908,539	219,852	721,339	501,487	455,987	17.2¢
All long-hauls dropped:	1,768,803	153,345	610,325	456,980	411,480	25.8¢
N.E. Corridor only kept:	1,258,423	102,561	552,855	450,294	404,794	35.8¢

(NOTE: Add 3 zeroes to all figures above, except in last column)

As the table above shows, cutting out long-distance routes doesn't reduce the Amtrak deficit as much as is commonly imagined. Cutting out one-third of the long routes, which is about what Amtrak was proposing as an economy measure before the recent Congressional reprieve, would reduce the required appropriation by only about $44.5 million. If Amtrak went so far as to cut back to the Northeast Corridor only, the deficit would be reduced by only about $140 million. At the same time, route reductions would raise the deficit per passenger mile quite sharply--it would more than triple it if operations were reduced to the Northeast Corridor only. Deficit per passenger mile is a commonly-quoted figure by Amtrak critics in the press. The corollary of this, of course, is that if more service were added--as in increased frequency on various routes--the deficit per passenger mile would drop, presumably to the point where Amtrak's deficit would disappear. This is a point that Amtrak President Paul Reistrup has made on numerous occasions, altho there appears little evidence that opinion makers and decision makers understand it. It's probably one of the reasons that rail supporters get so upset when Amtrak talks about selling off surplus equipment--they are aware that lack of equipment is the most common reason given for failure to initiate new services or increase frequencies.

The Table above appears quite simple and straightforward--and if so, why isn't this information readily available to rail planners? According to Mr. MacDonald, it's because of a flaw in the Amtrak Route Criteria: when a route is eliminated, the Allocated Costs of a route are usually not eliminated entirely, but are reallocated to the other services sharing the same facilities. For example, if the NATIONAL LIMITED were dropped, Washington Union Station could not be eliminated

What to join

NATIONAL

National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), 417 New Jersey Ave. S.E., Washington DC 20003. 202-546-1550. New member $10/year ($7.50 under 21 or over 65); membership renewal $15.

REGIONAL

(Most of the following groups are affiliated with NARP. Join NARP and then one or more regional groups of interest to you; each has its own membership fees.)

Citizens for Rail California (CRC). Northern Calif.: 1611 Spruce St., Berkeley CA 94709. 415-548-7043. Southern Calif.: PO Box 99782, San Diego CA 92109.

Colorado Association of Railroad Passengers, 6962 S. Jackson Way, Littleton CO 80122.

Delaware Valley Association of Railroad Passengers, PO Box 429, Bryn Mawr PA 19010.

Des Plaines Valley Improvement Association, 920 State St., Lockport IL 60441.

Florida Association of Railroad Passengers, 3808 Wisteria St., Sarasota FL 33581.

Georgia Association of Railroad Passengers, 2918 Houston Ave., Macon GA 31206.

Illinois Association of Railroad Passengers (IllinARP), 1815 W. Touhy Ave., Chicago IL 60626. 312-764-6259.

Iowa-Nebraska Association of Railroad Passengers, RR #3, Box 140, Des Moines IA 50321.

Kentucky Association of Railroad Passengers (KARP), PO Box 17091, Louisville KY 40217.

Maine Mid-Coast Rail Association, PO Box 235, Georgetown ME 04548.

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP), 515 Garfield, Jackson MI 49203.

Minnesota Association of Railroad Passengers (MinnARP), PO Box 375, Minneapolis MN 55440.

Mystic Valley Railway Society, Inc., PO Box 32, Mattapan MA 02126.

New Hampshire Association of Railroad Passengers, PO Box 851, Hanover NH 03755.

Northeast Transportation Coalition, PO Box 666, Meriden CT 06450.

Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP), Box 653, Xenia OH 45385.

Oregon Association of Railroad Passengers (OreARP), 7417 S.E. 20th Ave., Portland OR 97202.

Rail Passenger Association of the Southwest, PO Box 32041, Phoenix AZ 85064. (Covers Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas west of the Pecos River.)

Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers, 286 Thayer St., Providence RI 02903.

Texas Association of Railroad Passengers (TexARP), PO Box 61102, Houston TX; 713-444-6138; or 170 Carousel Dr., San Antonio TX 78227.

Vermont Association of Railroad Passengers, c/o Ronald Butterfield, Brandon VT 05733.

Washington Association of Railroad Passengers (WashARP), 2217 E. Newton, Seattle WA 98112; or West 444-21st, Spokane WA 99203.

CANADA

Transport 2000, CP/Box 300, Terminal A, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 8V3. Membership $5/year. For Canadian trains and Amtrak routes in Canada.

as one of Amtrak's costs; instead, its costs, which would remain about the same, would be divided up among the other trains using the station. But the Route Criteria, according to MacDonald, don't recognize the fact that all the Allocated Costs don't disappear. The Criteria assume that 25% of the costs of a dropped route will be eliminated, but fail to take into account the remaining 75% of the Allocated Costs, which must be divided up among the other routes. In the table, MacDonald has taken the step of including the remaining Allocated Costs.

When the remaining Allocated Costs are re-assigned to other trains, the deficit per passenger mile starts to rise and the system appears to be in worse financial shape than it was before routes were cut. In the extreme case of a Northeast Corridor-only system, riders would refuse to pay over three times the present fares, a cost that would be required to reach a break-even point. A better way of reaching for a break-even point is to add more trains to increase revenues and use the fixed facilities more efficiently, as Paul Reistrup has pointed out.

SUGGESTIONS ON WRITING TO LEGISLATORS

Having read many letters to lawmakers, we offer the following suggestions for maximum effectiveness in letter-writing:

(1) State briefly the topic of your letter in the upper right hand corner, under your address and date. For example: "Re: Amtrak funding" or "About passenger train legislation".

(2) Make your letter as brief as possible--about one single-spaced typed page is ideal. Don't take the opportunity to describe every detail of your last train trip, but just the important points you want to make. Your letter has a better chance of being read if it's not too time-consuming.

(3) If you are inspired or enraged by an article or editorial in the press, enclose a copy of it--that will save you having to try to summarize it.

(4) Above all, do it your own way. Write it in your own words.

The question of cost allocations has arisen before, when Amtrak was accused of inequitable allocation of Corridor costs to long-distance trains using Corridor facilities. One does not have to live west of the East Coast to understand that strong forces in Washington exist that wish to restrict Amtrak to the Northeast Corridor only, simply to fill in the gap of the bankrupt railroads there and let the rest of the nation's passenger service die. A lot of railroad management has the same idea, especially some of the larger Western railroads. They don't want Easterners riding passenger trains over their lines--or anyone else, for that matter. They do a lot to perpetuate the myth that long distance trains lose more money than corridor trains. Actually, the exact reverse may be true.

The media, unknowledgeable and hurried, fall for the myths created by the railroads and the Washington bureaucrats. For example, a Los Angeles Times opinion column two months ago said: "The most logical rail system appears to be in selected high density city-to-city corridors. Such turn-around service can compete profitably with the airlines, autos and buses, and can be of vital help in the event of another major fuel shortage. Airlines would be left with the bulk of long haul traffic, and buses could concentrate on even shorter city-to-city routes." These statements are replete with inaccuracies. Where is the "profit" for the Corridor in the table above? Do airlines really carry the bulk of long haul traffic, or is it the auto? Private buses won't want short, unprofitable routes, and the auto will continue to dominate them.

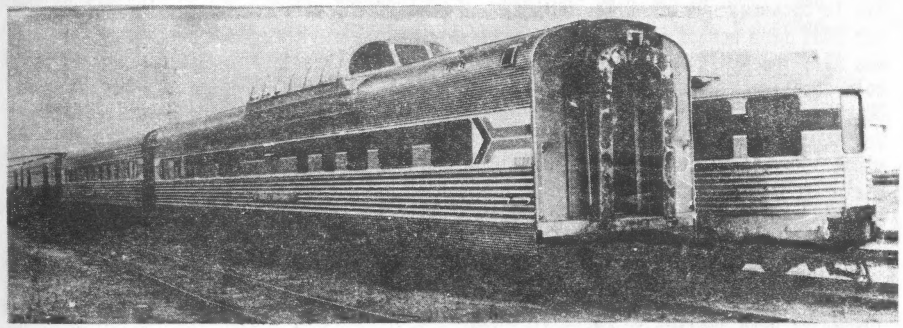
The decision makers need to have the correct data before them, not distorted data based on bureaucratic fantasies. And equally important, citizens need to tell their representatives clearly what it is they want, and what level of subsidy they will find acceptable. Americans are entitled to the world's best transportation. If we want a major rail passenger transportation system and are willing to pay for it, we must let that fact be known to our legislators.

EFFORTS FAIL TO HALT AMTRAK CAR SALE

Amtrak said on Dec 16 that 155 of the 170 conventional cars it put up for sale last month had been sold (pending final receipt of down payments). Amtrak said that the remaining 15 cars would be given to the Northeast Corridor pool. There was no indication of what types of cars remained unsold.

Thomas G. Allison, Chief Counsel for Senator Warren G. Magnuson, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, said in a letter to Glenn Lee early this month (Mr. Lee in an RTN ad had urged readers to write Allison protesting the sale of "surplus" conventional cars) that Magnuson's office, after much inquiry and discussion, had decided "not to do anything to stop the sale in view of the fact that Amtrak has made no provision for operating these cars once the switch to electric head end power is made early next year." He said that "While I very much regret the disposition of much of this equipment, there are many more serious issues currently facing rail passenger service in the U.S., that its very existence in many areas is seriously in doubt. I am afraid that things are building to somewhat of a crisis state, and I wish things looked better."

RTN's Paul Rayton examined the passenger cars for sale at Los Angeles and found five cars being disposed of which were not on the original Amtrak list that was published here in the First Nov issue. The added cars were 2814 "Altamaha River" (an ex-Southern 10/6 sleeper), 3341 and 3345 (two ex-SCL tavern-lounge roundend observation cars), 9801 "Silver Patio" (a dome coach-dormitory-coffee shop car from the BN), and 3260 "Wingate Brook" (a 5-double bedroom buffet lounge roundend observation car with large windows, originally built for the New York Central and well-liked by railfans).



Dome car "Silver Patio" and high-window observation "Wingate Brook" were found among Amtrak "surplus" cars for sale at Los Angeles auction. Photo by Paul Rayton.

It is RTN's impression that Amtrak tended to minimize the defects of the cars when addressing potential buyers but tended to maximize it when defending the sale before Congressmen or rail supporters. The vast majority of the cars were described to potential buyers as needing only "minimal work." However, when defending the sale in a letter to Congressman Joel Pritchard, Amtrak VP-Government Affairs Bruce Pike said that the "interior and mechanical components have worn out and are no longer produced by their manufacturers." He said that the "reconstruction of these cars would be extremely expensive, even if the various manufacturers were still producing rail passenger equipment."

Amtrak considers the sale outcome "very successful." In view of the number of rail supporters who appear to have become embittered by the move, however, one wonders whether the net outcome is to be considered a success for Amtrak.

THE WINTER BEGINS EARLY -- PART TWO

In our last issue we noted that a heavy rainstorm began in the Pacific Northwest Dec 2, bringing flood conditions that disrupted some rail lines. This was followed by snow that created more transportation problems. The storm moved on to the middle section of the country during the week of Dec 4, bringing very low temperatures and blizzard conditions. The following week was then one of very mild temperatures there--in the 50's. Some Amtrak operations were hit by the extreme winter weather conditions.

Heavy rains which forced closure of Interstate 90 in Snoqualmie Pass also washed out BN's ex-NP Stampede Pass route near Lester WA on Dec 1. The westbound EMPIRE BUILDER was not held as the storm built, and reached Easton WA, at the east foot of the pass before being stopped. The train was backed 12 miles to Cle Elum, wyed and sent eastward to Yakima where it stayed overnight. Washouts on the Stevens Pass ex-GN Cascade Tunnel route made NORTH COAST HIAWATHA operations iffy.

Only the Seattle-Vancouver operation in the Northwest continued without interruption in the flooding on Dec 2. The ex-GN line was closed as crews tried to save a bridge near Snohomish WA. NORTH COAST operations were annulled. After 7 inches of rain in 24 hours, 32 miles of track on the Stampede Pass route were either soft or missing. A slide near Longview WA delayed the COAST STARLIGHTS, and passengers were bused between trains on Dec 2. Morning and afternoon Amfleet local trains were able to get thru.

As of Dec 3 all three cross-mountain rail lines in Washington were closed: BN's Cascade Tunnel line by eroded fills near Snohomish; the Milwaukee Road by small washouts in the mountains; and the ex-NP line of BN by major washouts near Lester. All east-west Amtrak service was suspended. On Dec 7 the Milwaukee Road reopened its main line thru Snoqualmie Pass. Amtrak passengers were being bused from Seattle to Spokane. On Dec 8 the BUILDER and NORTH COAST were running on the Milwaukee Road line across Washington. First westbound train thru, re-routed on Milw was #17, the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, which reached Seattle 12:45am Dec 8, delayed by cold weather in North Dakota and Montana. First eastbound run thru was the EMPIRE BUILDER leaving Seattle 7:30am Dec 8. First westbd BUILDER was due Seattle 3am on Dec 9, delayed by extreme cold on the Montana prairies, with temperatures in the minus 30's (F) nearHavre. Some rail sources said BN might seek abandonment of the historic Stampede Route in favor of Milwaukee Road trackage rights. BN was working on opening the Cascade Tunnel route first. Amtrak was told to expect operation of the EMPIRE BUILDER over the Milwaukee Road route for perhaps months

On Dec 9 a report said that sub-zero windchill factors and drifting snow were causing trains delays and frozen switches on ICG's northern divisions, with 22 inches of snow falling on parts of them. The STATEHOUSE, train 300, was delayed behind a piggyback train stuck in a snowdrift at McLean IL for 2 hrs on the 9th. ICG rush hour commuter trains were delayed 10 mins to an hour that morning.

Meanwhile, very cold weather hit the eastern half of the nation. Detroit had a record low of zero on Dec 8. The LAKE SHORE LIMITED at Cleveland later in the month (Dec 17) was having problems progressing westward. The train was 2½hours late there, after the third change of engines (2 E units, 2 more, 2 SDP40F's, and an added Conrail GP40). Eight inches of snow on top of 5 inches of old snow had the Cleveland airport closed the night of the 16th and several hundred stranded at the airport. But train 49 had only 30 coach and 20 sleeper passengers, and only a handful boarded at Cleveland. The train also suffered brake troubles.

The BROADWAY LIMITED due in Chicago Dec 9 was reported only 18 mins late at Lima OH, but then delayed 4 hours by snow. When the train reached 35th St. in Chicago it was held there while the crew got off and boarded the outbound BROADWAY. The train sat there 2 hours while another crew, probably from Ft. Wayne, were called out to pilot the train the remaining short distance into Chicago. Passengers were dismayed that the eastbound train was not held a short time so the railroad crew could switch at Chicago Union Station.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

NEXT SCHEDULE CHANGES for Amtrak are due on Jan 8. On that date, the schedule of the FLORIDIAN is expected to be flip-flopped again, the train leaving Miami at 5pm and reaching Chicago at 7am, leaving Chicago at 11pm and arriving in Miami at 2:30pm. The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and the PIONEER will have schedule changes too. We don't have the final approved times, but expect the SFZ to leave Chicago later, at 6:10pm, arrive Denver 11:30am, leave Denver 12:15pm, arrive Ogden 11:40pm, lv Ogden 12:05am, ar Oakland 3:55pm. Eastbound it would lv Oakland 1:25pm (earlier), ar Ogden 6:50am, lv Ogden 7:05pm, ar Denver 6:25pm, lv Denver 7:10pm, ar Chicago 2:15pm, re-establishing a connection there with the BROADWAY LIMITED. The PIONEER train 25 is expected to lv Salt Lake at 11:10pm, ar Ogden 11:55pm, lv Ogden 12:40 am, ar Portland 6:05pm, lv Portland 6:15pm, and ar Seattle 10:05pm. Train 26 would lv Seattle at 7:40am, ar Portland 11:30am, lv Portland 11:40am, ar Ogden 6:35am, lv Ogden 7am, ar Salt Lake at 7:50am. The PANAMA LIMITED in February is expected to get scheduled into New Orleans about 2 hours earlier than now to connect with the SUNSET LIMITED. It would leave Chicago about 4:30. It is also rumored that the SHENANDOAH will become an overnight train in February.....

* * *

AMTRAK WAS AIMING for a Jan 8 startup of the new overnight Bay Area-Southern California train on the COAST STARLIGHT route, but it is believed it won't make that date, since SP seems to be dragging its brake shoes in approving the schedule of the train. Amtrak said no name has been chosen for it yet.....

WITH CHRISTMAS SEASON here it's interesting to discover that the most popular child's toy, after dolls, is the model train. It even outsells toy cars and trucks. America has a long-standing love affair with trains..... CONCRETE RAILROAD TIES were ordered by Amtrak in mid-December for the Northeast Corridor reconstruction--$37.8 million worth of them. Santa Fe/San Vel Corp. of Littleton MA got the contract for ties for 400 miles of track above and below New York City..

TURBO MAINTENANCE FACILITY at Rensselaer NY was opened by Amtrak on Nov 30. A dedication ceremony was held, and the next day the plant got underway maintaining all the Turboliners and locomotives running on the NY-Buffalo-Detroit and NY-Albany-Montreal routes. Amtrak pointed out that the facility allows work to be done in a "warm, well-equipped environment" instead of outdoors in sub-zero weather like last year..... EXTENSIVE TRACK WORK and signal improvement has been underway recently on the SCL Sanford subdivision (Jacksonville-Sanford), with new 132-lb ribbon rail, latest type CTC, nine new passing sidings each two miles long with high speed turnouts, and bridge rebuilding. This is primarily a passenger line (8 Amtrak trains, 5-6 freights daily), and the work should help Amtrak on-time performance there. Most freight goes Ocala-Wildwood via the Baldwin subdivision..... THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN and the Frisco line have approved a merger plan. It must be okayed by the ICC and stockholders.....

* * *

THE NORTHBOUND PALMETTO, train 90, collided with a loaded logging truck that pulled onto the tracks near Sellers SC, north of Florence, on Dec 6. The cab of the P30 diesel engine was shoved back into the body of the engine, and 3 crewmen were killed. The engineer, trainmaster and one crewman were killed, and the fireman was seriously injured--all of them were trapped in the cab of the GE diesel. Two passengers and 3 other railroad employees were also reported injured. The driver of the logging truck survived the wreck, but was hospitalized.....

AMTRAK AGAIN OFFERS its yearly calendar for sale. The 1978 version carries another Gil Reid painting, this one of the COAST STARLIGHT as it should appear when re-equipped with bi-level cars. The 24-33 inch calendar, all on one sheet, is available for $3.75 (tax & postage included) from: Amtrak Calendar, c/o Western Folder, 850 W. Fullerton Ave., Addison IL 60101. It should be off the press by late December. See partial illustration below.....

SLEEPING CAR SERVICE was restored on the PANAMA LIMITED, southbound Dec 9 and northbound Dec 11..... SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR arrived Chicago Dec 9 with no heat on the train except in the dome. The frozen diner had only sandwiches available. The BROADWAY reportedly arrived in Chicago around the same date with five unheated coaches..... DINING CAR SERVICE has been restored on the PANAMA LIMITED, Amtrak announced Dec 14, using a modified Amdinette car, for dinner and breakfast hours. Amtrak said new menus feature two dinner entrees and three full-course breakfast in addition to the regular sandwich and snack fare. Food is prepared off the train and heated on the train in convection ovens. A special section of the Amdinette car carries this service, which the opposite end of the car is a lounge area. Amtrak promises tablecloths, fresh flowers, waiters and waitresses. The new service began at the same time as restored sleeper service (see above)...

THE AMTRAK BOARD of Directors on Dec 14 approved spending $6.4 million for the next phase--phase 3--of the modernization program at Beech Grove Shop in Indianapolis. Beech Grove is the majorheavy overhaul facility for Amtrak cars.....

THE MILWAUKEE ROAD filed for reorganization under federal bankruptcy law on Dec 19. Company operations can continue as normal under the bankruptcy proceedings..... THE MILWAUKEE TURBOS on the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend carried as many as 430 passengers on parts of the route--quite a trick for a train that seats only 270 in its five cars. Trains 9 & 10, the TWIN CITIES HIAWATHA, were lengthened over Thanksgiving with the two normal 3- or 4-car Amfleet sets combined into one train, with conventional cars (including domes) and two E units for the opposing set. Train 9 on that Sunday carried a total of 752 between Chicago and Minneapolis..... STARTING IN JANUARY, Amtrak will join with Kellogg's cereals to give out free Kiddy Ride tickets, one ticket for each box coupon and set of three Kellogg box tops presented to an Amtrak ticket agent. The offer is good from Jan 1, 1978 thru Jan 31, 1979..... THE "STAR WARS" effect travels everywhere. One reader, inspired by the film, suggests Obi Ben Kenobi for Amtrak President; Darth Vader for operations manager; Luke Skywalker for on-board services manager; R2D2 for reservations bureau manager; and Princess Leia for congressional-relations officer. Several Wookies might direct various Amtrak district on-board service supervision offices..... THE ROCK ISLAND held an auction of railroad memorabilia Dec 10 in Chicago, the result of an office move. Six mother-of-pearl train pictures sold for as much as $3750 each. A rolltop desk went for almost $2000, etc....

MONTREAL'S TRANSIT SYSTEM was to resume service after the strike on Dec 8.....

AN OUTFIT CALLED "Amtrak Communications," selling mobile automobile telephones, does business in Edmonton, Canada..... NORTHBOUND PANAMA LIMITED had to detour

on Dec 16 because of an ICG freight derailment. The train ran the ICG main from Jackson MS to Memphis. GE diesels 720 and 721, regularly in the PANAMA consists, reportedly have been having generator problems and have contributed to some delays. As a result, at least one F40PH engine is now being seen on the train.....

THE UPCOMING "SUPERMAN" movie will include scenes with the baby Superman racing a train called the "Kansas Star." The Star is actually a CP Rail train consisting of locomotive 4037, two 2200-series coaches, a boxcar, baggage car, and caboose. The lashup was filmed on CP's Aldersyde subdivision, near Lethbridge, Alberta. Altho the sequence will last two minutes in the film, nearly 100 short runs were made on a 2-mile stretch of line near Barons, Alta. Some of the crew were veterans of "Silver Streak" filming in the same area a few years ago. CP won't reveal the "how" of special effects used in the filming..... ROSE BOWL SPECIAL charter train is expected to arrive Los Angeles from the north the morning of Jan 1, on the COAST STARLIGHT route..... DESPITE THE RUMORS about bad results with the bi-level cars built so far, Amtrak says that tho ride quality tests revealeda hard-riding car, spring softening corrected the problem. Six coaches have been completed so far, but Amtrak has not taken delivery of them. All the modifications indicated by the tests must be done prior to delivery. Tho the Pullman-Standard strike continues (since Oct 1), the two sides began negotiations this month, and Amtrak is "encouraged" by this action..... "THE FUTURE CONSTRUCTION of dome cars has not been eliminated altogether" says Amtrak's Government Affairs department in a recent letter to a Congressman, after complaints about Amtrak selling off some dome cars. But the department also said "Some of the new Superliners will have observation windows similar to the dome cars." The latter is untrue. There is virtually no resemblance between bi-level lounges (or Santa Fe hi-level lounges) and domes. Only the latter permit forward and rearward viewing and were the most revolutionary development in passenger cars in modern times. Virtually every rail passenger we have ever spoken with who has encountered dome cars has found them the most outstanding feature of passenger trains. The Santa Fe hi-level lounge did not revolutionize rail travel..... "AUTO-TRAIN IS NOT part of Amtrak" says Auto-Train Corporation in a current NY Times ad, "We don't rely on the government to support us. We rely on people--you and only you"..... AMTRAK'S PAUL REISTRUP told a conference in Ocala, Florida on Dec 15 that the re-routing of the FLORIDIAN (Chattanooga-Atlanta-Macon-Svannah) will begin Apr 30. The CHAMPION is to be reinstated on Feb 26..... SPECIAL SKI TRAIN between Minneapolis and Duluth on Fridays begins operation Dec 23, running each Friday thru March 25. It is supported by Amtrak the Minnesota DOT, the Duluth Transit Authority, and the Duluth Hotel-Motel Association..... AMTRAK HAS DISCONNECTED its telephones for taking calls about possible train discontinuances, since the Amtrak system has been "frozen" pending the Amtrak-DOT review and Congressional approval..... A SERVICE TEST is to be run on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED the first 3 months of 1978, to check ridership and other matters. The worst time of year to do that?..... THE EMPIRE BUILDER train 8 had to stop at Emerado ND on Nov 27 so the local fire department could put out a fire in furniture in the women's restroom in coach 4543. Reader W.P. Cornwell learned of this on his railroad scanner..... AMTRAK WILL BE the "Official Carrier" for the 1979 International Special Olympic Games in Brockport NY...

THE CITY OF Anaheim CA has asked Amtrak to make stops there with the SAN DIEGANS..... THE SUPREME COURT this month agreed to decide whether New York City's designation of Grand Central as an historical landmark is constitutional.....

News in this issue is updated thru Dec 20 p.m.....

CANADIAN SCHEDULE CHANGES (continued from page 5)

The second service will run Montreal-Vaudreuil on CN, Vaudreuil-North Bay on CP (using CN North Bay station), and North Bay-Vancouver on CN. The schedule will be similar to the present CANADIAN schedule. Thru cars will operate from Toronto to Vancouver using trains 98 & 99.

Beginning Sept 16 the CTC's "Final Plan" will be introduced, with the schedule (not known yet) running thru Oct 29 before the fall timetable changes.

OLDEST ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE in America, retired engine #E50 A&B which worked for almost 62 years on the Milwaukee Road, was placed Nov 11 in the collection of the Lake Superior Museum of Transportation in Duluth MN..... CHESSIE STEAM SPECIALS will run again in 1978, with the basic plan the same as this year's. It is hoped that roller bearings can be installed this winter on Ross Rowland's ex-Reading 4-8-4 to avoid difficulties which plagued it this year..... A LOCOMOTIVE RESTORATION project more ambitious than the Friends of the GG-1's work is planned--to be coordinated by the Lancaster Chapter NRHS, Friends of the K-4 hope to raise up to $100,000 to restore and operate an ex-Pennsy K-4 now at Strasburg...

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA READER Karen Overgaard observed the northbound COAST STARLIGHT from her Burbank CA office running frequently late, so she kept a systematic record of its timekeeping at that location on workdays from Jun 22 to Jul 21 and for two weeks in November. The train, just a few miles away from its Los Angeles point of origin, should be mostly on time. However, her records showed the train late over half the time--and most of the tardinesses were massive, not just a few minutes. The average lateness was 35.4 minutes (on occasions when it was late) and the time ranged from 8 minutes late on two occasions to 95 and 90 minutes on two other occasions (Jun 29 & Nov 8 respectively). An Amtrak spokesman said that these would be due mainly to waiting for connections from the SUNSET and SOUTHWEST LIMITED and occasionally from a SAN DIEGAN. The spokesman calculated that about 30 minutes of "recovery time" exists in the L.A.-Oakland schedule, so on the average these delays wouldn't make the train late at Oakland. A similar recovery time (padding) probably occurs also in the Oakland-Portland leg. SDP40F engine speed limits are still on on the BN section Portland-Seattle, and lateness can be expected on that run.....

* * *

ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF was ordered by FRA Administrator John M. Sullivan to halt all operations on the 130-mile section of track between Rock Creek Junction, MO and Clark, MO by 12:01am Dec 8 because the signalling system was not working properly--the devices hampered by weeds and trees entangled in the signal line wires. FRA and state inspectors have been inspecting the line for over a year. They said they repeatedly warned ICG about the situation, but the railroad responded too slowly to correct a "very dangerous situation". A Federal judge then granted the railroad a 7-day postponement of the shutdown on the freight-only line..... "THE WINTER SEASON has officially arrived" writes a Memphis observer, "when the PANAMA LIMITED begins its seasonal daytime schedule thru Memphis" (the two trains are normally due thru around midnight and 5am). No. 59 on Dec 7 was 5 hours late and delayed an hour more while passengers were fed and baggage car 1237 was switched from front to rear of train due to faulty jumper connections. The Amcafe was bad-ordered because of power problems, and earlier engine problems were blamed for the delay. Consist of the affected train was engine 723 (P30 diesel), baggage 1237, and Amfleet cars 21867, 21878, 20206, and 21884. The observer believes that Amfleet scheduling in winter weather conditions on the PANAMA is not much improved over the conventional equipment which was replaced last January..... AMTRAK'S MOVE FROM L'Enfant Plaza to 400 North Capitol Avenue in Washington will be completed in early February. The weekend of Dec 17-18, the Accounting Dept. was moving. Already at the new address are National Operations, Operations Support, Personnel, and Marketing. The move on the first weekend of February will find Public Affairs, Legal, Government Affairs, Planning, and the President's Office relocating to the new building just across from Washington Union Station.....

ADDENDUM TO RAIL FANTRIPS

SPECIAL NOTE: The Apr 1 PA trip listed on next page has been cancelled.

Feb. 4-9: Mardi Gras private RR car excursion Washington-New Orleans with lounge-sleeper "Lionel Ives." $350--$100 deposit, bal. due by Jan 15. Rail Travel Ass'n, PO Box 62, Alexandria VA 22313. (703) 938-4666.

EXPRESS ADS

ONE QUICK CALL DOES IT ALL--Amtrak or airline reservations and tickets, hotels, car rentals, tours, cruises! Call GREAT WESTERN TOURS at (415) 398-2994, or write us at 639 Market Street, Ninth Floor, San Francisco 94105.

DINING CAR DISHES, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, Pullman, stationery, rules, metal items from 25 railroads. Long stamped envelope for list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kan. 67213. (Will buy large and small railroad collections.)

GOING EURAIL? Take a worldwide THOMAS COOK INTERNATIONAL TIMETABLE, $7.50 bulk mail ($9.50 air) from Thomas Cook Ltd, P.O. Box 36, Peterborough, England.

TIMETABLES - AMTRAK "The first six years" - Compendium of over 500 timetables issued during this period. Those available for sale and prices shown. Send 50¢ and SSAE. Refundable with purchase. CARL LOUCKS, 199 Wayland, Hamden CT 06518.

NORTHWEST RAIL IMAGES announces three new duplicate slide sets: Amtrak West, Amtrak East, and Trains of Northern Mexico. Each contains 25 views for $6.00. New customers may prefer to send 35¢ for a sample slide and complete list of more than 20 sets now available, including our popular "Before Amtrak" series. Northwest Rail Images, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

Traveler's Trots? Portable water distiller with nylon carrying case. Many other home and commercial uses. Mr. Moist, Box 434A, Royal Oak, Mich. 48068.

RR UNIFORM CAPS OR BADGES wanted buy or trade, esp. LV, Frisco, Big Four, MKT, L&N, D&RGW, B&O Capitol Dome, what have you? Savio, Box 3550, Pasadena CA 91103

COAST DAYLIGHT ITEMS wanted anything big/small Savio Box 3550, Pasadena CA 91103

NAME TRAIN LUGGAGE STICKERS wanted. Savio, Box 3550, Pasadena CA 91103.

COMING SOON: RTN's long-awaited First Rail Travel Yearbook. Look for announcement in these pages. If you have already ordered your $3.50 copy, yours will be shipped promptly when off the press, in order received. This limited edition is to be the first in a series of Yearbooks that historians, railfans, transportation workers and librarians will want to keep handy for reference purposes. Published by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads (camera-ready) $1.25 per square inch. Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley 94709

RAIL FANTRIPS

Jan. 31-Feb. 7, 1978: Winter Rails adventure; RT from Chicago, SFZ, RGZ, Colorado RR Museum, Cumbres & Toltec snowplow, lodging, SFZ back. $565 & up. Mini-trip Feb 3-6, $225. NRHS-Overland Chap., 320 Wisconsin #511, Oak Park IL 60302.

Apr. 1, 1978: Boston MA-Portland ME: Alco PA locos, 1st train of conv'l equip't in 18 yrs to Portland on B&M. Runbys, etc. $29.95 by Mar. 1. RR Enthusiasts Inc., Box 136 - Dept. N, Ward Hill, MA 01830. Approved by B&M/MBTA.

Jan. 21-22: Annual Winter Railfan Spectacular, North Shore Commemoration Weekend. 10-mile RT rides on 3-car North Shore train, etc. Info: East Troy Trolley Museum, PO Box 726, East Troy WI 53120. 414-332-7728.

One special Fantrips listing is free, subject to our editing. Send full info to RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, FANTRIPS DEPT, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.